



DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

# LONG BEACH

## YMCA YOUTH INSTITUTE

### NEWSLETTER

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## SPOTLIGHT!

Liliana Burgos, Class of 2008

This year has been one to remember and I mean it. Most people say they "had a summer to remember" but eventually over time, they forget and the only way they can remember is when someone else reminds them. But that's not going to happen to me. Not this summer. I've learned too much to let it go to waste. For example, I spoke in front of hundreds of people. I made a video, my very own song, and new friends that I will cherish in my heart forever.

When I came, I didn't know a lot about music; I barely play the cello. My training was limited to classical music so unlike my indie taste in music. A few musicians here took time to teach me how to play guitar, I owe them a lot. Practicing guitar taught me patience and instilled a newfound appreciation of music. I loved it so much that it inspired me to create a song. Although simple, my group enjoyed it so much that we decided to make a music video out of it.

I was so happy. I mean, how many people make music videos out of a beginner's song? Especially one I made? I felt honored. When we finished our movie, I was so proud yet embarrassed; I didn't know what to do. I was grinning from ear to ear. This was the Youth Institute's first music video – made with my song! The joy will last in my heart forever.

Then the time came for everyone to pick a class speaker. Low and behold, they picked me! I never thought of myself as a good speaker so I questioned myself. Why would they pick me? But they assured me. They told me I had what it takes; I had the energy and I could talk to people. I thought to myself, "I can and I will." I ended up talking to hundreds of people about how I felt in the Youth Institute. I was so nervous! I never had to talk to people as I did during graduation. Never has everyone's eyes been on me. The feeling was exhilarating but I was able to do it. I wouldn't have been able to do it had the Youth Institute not taught me to step up. Last summer I would have chickened out and refused to talk in front of people. The Youth Institute helped me. They taught me leadership skills, skills that I will use now and in the future. Bottom line – Youth Institute rocks!



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# HELPING GROW LEADERS

Romana Vera, Class of 2007

This summer three alumni had the privilege of being a tech tutor at the Pasadena Film Institute. Being part of those three chosen was great. In the beginning I was a little sketchy about the whole thing. I worried if I was going to be a good role model to the students and if I was going to teach them correctly. It helped a lot that Leslie Barnes was also one of those picked because he went the year before. He gave Jaime and I great advice about being a tech tutor. They were simple things that helped us a lot.

I learned more about being a leader in Pasadena than in any other place I have taught at. I think I learned more this time because I wasn't around all my friends playing around. I was paired up with two incredible young men who know how to balance work time and play time very well. They were a great influence on me.

The kids also taught us things like being more patient and tolerant. There were kids from the ages of 11 to about 16 with different characteristics that needed to be handled differently. There were conflicts at times but in the end they were always resolved. We built strong bonds over the eight-week program. That's what an institute is all about.



summer 2008

## ICE COOL SUMMER

Vigeneareay Phriang, Class of 2008

I am thankful that I joined the YMCA this summer of '08. This program has proved to be beneficial to my life. At first I didn't take my future seriously because I was not confident about myself. I didn't think that I could be anymore successful than any other student at school because some just seemed so much smarter than me. After the program I now know many staff, especially Bob and Les, who say "[they'll] always have my back as long as I am still participating in the Youth Institute program."

The wilderness retreat was more fun than expected. I learned how to live amongst nature – in the company of many kids. We gathered around a campfire getting to know, socialize and bond with one another. Moreover, I got a chance to rappel down a sixty-foot cliff, wash myself in a snow-fed river, and do many camp activities my parents couldn't afford to offer me. Being in a river full of laughing people is an experience that will live with me forever. The cold was refreshing and uplifting, everybody was screaming in joy, and we



worked to build a dam. After the wilderness retreat I understand nature; Kings Canyon makes our El Dorado Nature Center seem like a park.

After the camping trip we came back to the digital media studio to learn how to use various software. I now know how to use Garage Band and Reason for making music, Dreamweaver for web design, Adobe Photoshop for graphic design, iMovie and Final Cut Pro to edit video, and Cinema 4-D to make 3D animations. Using these tools was wonderful as it allowed me to make a movie that I enjoyed making and love watching.



# EIGHT YEARS AND COUNTING

Bob Cabeza and Les Peters

We are asking all of our Youth Institute class to take part in the Haunted House this October - both set up and break down, as well as operation.

And we would like to personally invite all of you to our Alumni Holiday Party on December 19th.

But the most important message is to stay in touch and come down to the Youth Institute Lab. Keep up with friends that you have made and keep those friends strong throughout the year.

PEACE!  
Bob and Les



from the archives .

Well Teens, here you are in the eighth year of the YMCA Youth Institute. First Years are already finishing up college and running this place. Look at Prum, Dawny, Jonathan, Leonard, Troy and Phyras.

Lakisha Thomas has just graduated from CSULB and is the Site Director for an after school site at the Los Altos YMCA. Many of our OG Youth Institute participants are busy with full-time jobs and college.

Many of you have had a great experience this summer and we commend you for your hard work and tenacity. The new class of '08 are now just embarking on their first and second years of high school.

But now is the time that we ask you to give back. We are asking all of the Youth Institute class to volunteer as Tech Tutors some time this year at our after school sites.



# ENDING ONE JOURNEY, BEGINNING ANOTHER

Abelardo Gutierrez, Class of 2006

These last few weeks of summer are a bittersweet feeling for most high school kids in the Youth Institute. On the down side, it's the end of summer, the end of waking up past noon, the end of not sleeping until the sun comes up, the end of hanging out with friends while the adults are at work and unfortunately, the end of doing absolutely nothing productive at all. On the plus side, it's the opportunity to make new friends and learn new things and for some of us, this is the culmination of 13 years of schooling, the moment we have been waiting for since before we can remember: senior year of high school.

Being a senior is a bit of a surreal feeling. It feels like just yesterday we were innocent freshmen going into the wrong classroom and trying to make it seem like we didn't care about school. Now, here we are, on the brink of 12th grade, on the verge of college applications, scholarship applications, being the big men on campus, and at the conclusion of our standard education. I, as I'm sure a good number of

my fellow class of 2009 friends are, am a bit apprehensive as to what lies ahead – the worries, the struggles, and ultimately, the feeling of accomplishment upon receiving our high school diploma.

However, the road to senior year has not been a straight path without its bumps and turns for anybody in this graduating class. We have had to make very difficult decisions, learn how to be self-motivated, and most of all, develop patience and persistence. Thankfully, since I have joined the Youth Institute, it has been there every step of the way to help me when I needed emotional, digital, and academic support. So to my fellow upcoming seniors, we are almost at the end of the tunnel, getting ready for bigger and better things. Get ready. Let's just hope the staff at the Youth Institute is ready with the plethora of questions about FAFSA, financial aid, and admissions, we will no doubtedly have.



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